

REMARKS

Claims 2-5, 9, 15 and 16 remain pending in the application. Claims 1, 6-8, 10-14, 17 and 18 have been cancelled. Reconsideration of the rejection and allowance of the pending application in view of the following remarks are respectfully requested.

As an initial matter, Applicants would like to thank the Examiner for allowing claims 2-5, 9, 15 and 16.

Applicants note that the Examiner has not yet indicated whether the drawings filed on July 6, 2000 are acceptable. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner confirm the acceptability of the drawings in the next Office communication.

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1, 7, 8, 10-12, 17 and 18 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Muramoto et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,507,359) in view of Okauchi et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,864,360). The Examiner further rejected claims 6, 10, 13 and 14 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Muramoto et al. in view of Okauchi et al., and further in view of Watanabe et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,819,016).

To expedite prosecution of the present application to issue, Applicants herewith cancel claims 1, 6-8, 10-14, 17 and 18, leaving only allowed claims 2-5, 9, 15 and 16 pending in the application. Cancellation of these claims should not be viewed as an acquiescence by Applicants to the propriety of the rejections.

Based on the above, it is respectfully submitted that this application is now in condition for allowance, and a Notice of Allowance is respectfully requested.


SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Entry and consideration of the present amendment, reconsideration of the outstanding Office Action, and allowance of the present application and all of the claims therein are respectfully requested and now believed to be appropriate. Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present invention in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,
Tetsuya ABE et al.



Bruce H. Bernstein
Reg. No. 29,027

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GREENBLUM & BERNSTEIN, P.L.C.
1950 Roland Clarke Place
Reston, VA 20191
(703) 716-1191

Steven Wegman
Reg. No. 31,438